

Revival of Vigil Seen for Cuba's U. S. Prisoners

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MIAMI, Dec. 25 — The last three days have been a frustrating experience for most reporters covering the Christmas homecoming of the liberated Bay of Pigs prisoners. One veteran newsman at Dinner Key Auditorium, trying to describe the emotional chaos that accompanied the arrival here of each busload of freed Cubans, exclaimed:

"Here I am on one of the most dramatic stories of the year and I don't know what to write. How can I put into understandable words what is going on in the hearts of all these people?"

There was Merida de Nunez, a brunette with a sensitive Madonna's face, who waited all of Sunday and Monday at the Auditorium through busload after busload of heroes, going without sleep for more than 70 hours. She stood up and applauded as each new file of men marched in amid screams, sobs and popping flashbulbs.

Vigil Ends Happily

And each time, almost lifelessly, she sat down again, her dark eyes dazed—until finally the last bus brought her vigil to an ecstatic end.

There was also the mother who clung to her homecoming son as she cried hysterically over and over again, "My God, you're home! My God, you're home!" and had to be gently taken from him by Red Cross nurses.

Such scenes, climaxed today by festive Christmas dinners, in some cases roast suckling pig specially prepared by loving wives, may soon be re-enacted on a smaller scale. Cuban Premier Fidel Castro has told James B. Donovan, who negotiated the exchange of Cuban prisoners for drugs and food, that he was prepared to discuss the release of 25 Americans now held in Cuba prisons.

Donovan, who returned from Havana last night on the last prisoner-loaded plane, did not make clear, however, whether a new ransom deal was contemplated.

Ramone S. Eaton, vice president of the American Red Cross, said his organization has been trying for six months to clear the way for the release of the American captives. All are civilians accused of "crimes against the revolution," including the illegal flying of planes over Cuban territory. The pilots were captured, in some cases, when engine trouble forced them to land.

Until now, Eaton said, all efforts on behalf of the United States prisoners have met with failure, but he added that with the release of the Cubans the atmosphere now is more favorable for discussions with the Cuban government.

Castro so far has not permitted the Red Cross to enter Cuba to see the prisoners or to discuss their release, Eaton reported. Nor has the Red Cross been able to establish an arrangement with Cuba similar to that operating in Communist China, under which relatives are permitted to send mail and packages to American prisoners once a month.

Contacts Led to Talks

The American Red Cross, Eaton said, had been communicating not with the Castro government directly, but with the Cuban Red Cross through letter and cable. Also, Red Cross officials of the two countries have discussed the prisoners at International Red Cross conferences. Apparently, these contacts paved the way for talks on the subject. Eaton said he had made several trips to

Havana to negotiate the liberation of the Bay of Pigs captives.

If Castro should demand ransom for the Americans, no machinery now exists for soliciting funds for that purpose. An official of the Cuban Families Committee for Liberation of Prisoners of War, which was set up to gather the \$53 million needed to free the Cubans, said this organization

would not be used in the service of the Americans.

It was made strictly of the families of the Bay of Pigs

prisoners, the official pointed out, and will remain in existence until about July, when the last shipment of drugs and food is scheduled to arrive in Cuba. The group is responsible for making good on ransom